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ABSTRACT

A study was made of the effects of three types of preparation on the accuracy of prospective teachers in conducting an Informal Reading Inventory (IRI), with 73 undergraduate students exhibiting features of Spanish in oral reading in English: (1) the study of Spanish (two or more semesters), (2) training in conducting an IRI (provided in a practicum course), and (3) experience in conducting the IRI with students of a Spanish-language background. Accuracy was measured by a count of the miscues correctly recorded as dialect features by the prospective teachers and by a count of the miscues unrelated to dialect which were incorrectly identified as dialect features. A brief summary of the implications is included. (MB)

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PERFORMANCE BY PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS WITH DIFFERENT PREPARATION IN DIAGNOSIS OF ORAL READING BY A LINGUISTICALLY DIFFERENT STUDENT

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PERFORMANCE BY PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS WITH DIFFERENT PREPARATION IN DIAGNOSIS OF ORAL READING BY A LINGUISTICALLY DIFFERENT STUDENT

Background

In recent years, educators have become increasingly concerned with the preparation of teachers who work with "linguistically different" students, those whose language is characterized by frequent occurrence of, what have been labeled, "non-standard" dialect features or of features of languages other than English. The belief that teachers and prospective teachers lack positive attitudes toward and understandings of language differences has received considerable support from research (Williams, 1969, 1970, 1971; Horn, 1971; Ford, 1974; Garcia, 1974). The research cited and two recent studies (Lamberg, 1976; Lamberg and McCaleb, 1976) suggest the need for special training, directly geared to working with students with language differences.

The Study

This study was addressed to the potential need for special training. A study was made of the effects of three types of preparation on the accuracy of prospective teachers in conducting an Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) with a student who exhibits features of Spanish in his oral reading in English: (1) the study of Spanish (two or more semesters), (2) training in conducting and IRI (provided in a practicum course), and (3) experience in conducting the IRI with a student with a Spanish-language background.

The question addressed in the study was: How accurate would prospective teachers be in conducting the IRI, given no special training and differing preparation. Accuracy was measured in two ways: (1) a count of miscues recorded by the prospective teachers which were correctly coded as dialect features; and (2) a count of recorded miscues unrelated to dialect which were incorrectly identified as dialect features.

Subject

Subjects were 73 undergraduate students, taking courses in the teaching of reading at The University of Texas at Austin, during the Spring Term, 1976. Subjects were first divided into three groups on the basis of whether or not they had training in giving an IRI, and experience in working with a student with a Spanish-language background. Each group was then divided into those who had and had not studied Spanish for two or more semesters.

Procedures

Subjects conducted an IRI from a taped reading of a one-hundred word passage. They were asked to record and code miscues that they thought might be dialect features as well as those that they thought were not related to dialect.

Subjects' responses were compared, for agreement, with those of three judges who had experience in giving the IRI and who had read reports of research which identified features characteristic of the English of students with a Spanish-language background (Lance, 1969; Natalicio & Williams, 1971).

Null Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant differences between subjects who had studied Spanish and those who did not but who otherwise had the same training and experience when compared on:

1.1 Miscues correctly identified as dialect features.

1.2 Miscues incorrectly identified as dialect features.

2. There will be no significant differences between subjects in three groups who had not studied Spansih but who otherwise had differing preparation when compared on:

2.1 Miscues correctly identified as dialect features.

2.2 Miscues incorrectly identified as dialect features.

3. There will be significant differences between subjects in three groups who had studied Spanish but otherwise had differing preparation when compared on:

3.1 Miscues correctly identified as dialect features.

3.2 Miscues incorrectly identified as dialect features.

Results

There were no significant differences between mean scores of groups who did and did not study Spanish but otherwise had the same preparation. Hypotheses 1.1 and 1.2 were not rejected. Table 1 presents the means and *t*-values for the six groups. There were no significant differences between mean scores of subjects who had not studied Spanish and who had differing preparation. Hypotheses 2.1 and 2.2 were not rejected. Table 2 presents the mean scores and *t*-values.

A comparison was made of the scores of subjects who did study Spanish but who had differing preparation. In correctly coding dialect features, there were no significant differences between Groups 2 (no training, no experience), Group 4 (training, no experience) and Group 6 (training, experience). In incorrectly coding miscues unrelated to dialect as dialect features, there were no significant differences between Groups 2 and 4. There were significant differences in incorrect responses between Group 6 and 2 (1.08 and 3.44, with $t = 2.19$, $p < .05$) and between Group 6 and Group 4 (1.08 and 6.30, with $t = 3.65$ $p < .01$). Hypothesis 3.1 was not rejected. Hypothesis 3.2 was rejected. Table 3 presents the means and *t*-values.

Discussion

It would appear that the results were affected by an interaction between variables; i.e., the different types of preparation. Subjects with training and experience made fewer errors than did subjects in the other groups. Of the trained and experienced subjects, those who had

studied Spanish made fewer errors than those who had not ($\bar{x}$ = 1.08 and 1.9), though the differences were not significant. The only significant differences found were in the comparison for incorrect responses between subjects with training, experience, and Spanish (Group 6) and subjects who also had Spanish but lacked either training (Group 2) or experience (Group 4).

Implications

Results of this study must be interpreted in light of limitations of the design and the procedures in the task used to collect data.

Given the limitations, there remains considerable support for the need for training experiences specially designed to prepare teachers to diagnose the reading of a student who is linguistically different from them. Training in the IRI and experience, by themselves, and together, do not appear to be sufficient preparation. The subjects in all groups might be described as inconsistent and inaccurate. If they had recorded none of the dialect features, instruction would not be needed. They did, however, record some of the features, though far fewer than the judges, and, more importantly, they did incorrectly code miscues unrelated to dialect as dialect features. Unable to accurately distinguish dialect features from miscues unrelated to dialect, the teacher might, on the one hand, underestimate the student's ability, or, on the other hand, fail to see some miscues which are unrelated to dialect as symptoms of skill deficiencies.

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Table 1

Mean Scores for Correct and Incorrect Responses by Subjects With and Without Spanish Who Had No Training (Groups 1 and 2), Training (Groups 3 and 4), and Training and Experience (Groups 5 and 6)

Groups	Correct Responses		Incorrect Responses	
	$\bar{x}$	t	$\bar{x}$	t
1 N=9	1.56		2.89	
2 N=18	1.44	.18	3.44	.33
3 N=9	.44		4.55	
4 N=13	.54	.21	6.30	.74
5 N=11	.73		1.91	
6 N=18	.54	.76	1.08	1.06

Table 2

Mean Scores for Correct and Incorrect Responses by Subjects Who Had Not Studied Spanish and Had No Training (Group 1), Had Training (Group 3) and Had Training and Experience (Group 5)

	Group 1	Group 3	Group 5	t
Correct	1.56	.44		1.81
	1.56		.73	1.84
		.44	.73	.65
Incorrect	2.89	4.55		.77
	2.89		1.91	.98
		4.55	1.91	1.32

Table 3

Mean Scores for Correct and Incorrect Responses by Subjects Who Had Studied Spanish and Had No Training (Group 2), Training (Group 4), and Training and Experience (Group 6)

	Group 2	Group 4	Group 6	t
Correct	1.44	.54		1.70
	1.44		.54	1.80
		.54	.54	0
Incorrect	3.44	6.30		1.84
	3.44		1.08	2.19[1]
		6.30	1.08	3.65[2]

[1] $p < .05$

[2] $p < .01$